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July 19, 2002

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
173 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510-4704

Dear Senator Murray: *Patty*

I am writing to urge you to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program during this session of Congress.

In Washington, we have been successful in moving families off welfare and into real jobs with an opportunity for advancement. We have cut the state's caseload by 45 percent. The proportion of the population on welfare is the lowest in more than 30 years, and the poverty rate for households headed by single mothers with very young children dropped by 12 percent.

Each year, Washington reinvests more than \$200 million of welfare caseload savings into child care. These funds allow us to offer a subsidy to help low-income working parents pay for safe, dependable care for their children. Child care assistance is necessary for low-income families to leave and stay off welfare. This is why I believe any increase in the work participation rates must be accompanied by a commensurate and guaranteed increase in child care funding.

I am pleased that the Senate Finance Committee bill links child care funding to increased work requirements. Unfortunately, the House bill (HR4737) fails to provide similar support. We estimate that the work participation requirements in HR4737 would cost Washington a minimum of \$136 million in added child care costs over five years, but the bill provides only \$20 million in new funding. This unfunded mandate would require us to cut child care for working families in order to pay the child care costs of welfare recipients forced into "make work" jobs.

The Senate Finance Committee bill contains many elements that I support:

- stronger, but achievable, work requirements;
- incentives that hold states accountable for putting parents into real jobs;
- flexibility to use federal funds to serve legal immigrants; and
- reasonable definitions of activities that count as work so proven approaches combining work with job training can be continued.

It is essential that these elements, along with adequate funding for child care, be included in the TANF legislation.

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I also believe that Congress must continue to allow states the flexibility in program administration that has made welfare reform an unparalleled domestic policy success. I am deeply concerned that HR4737 severely restricts state flexibility and attempts to impose a one-size-fits-all approach that ultimately will fail.

Enactment of HR4737 would force Washington to abandon proven initiatives in order to create large public systems of workfare jobs. We know from our five years of experience that these "make work" jobs do not lead to the real jobs families need to get off and stay off welfare. It makes no sense to abandon successful approaches in favor of a strategy that has been proven to be flawed.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you as you consider this important legislation to reauthorize TANF.

Sincerely,



Gary Locke  
Governor